homemakers' chat
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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, October 6, 1941.

SUBJECT: "YOUR MONEY'S WORTH IN VITAMIN C." Information from nutrition scientists at various State agricultural experiment stations.

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The news today is about your health and your pocketbook during the coming winter. Here are tips to help you and your family feel tip-top all winter without lavishing money on expensive foods or unnecessary vitamin pills.

This is the time of year to turn your attention especially to vitamin C, because this is the vitamin so many people run short of in winter, particularly people who have low-cost meals. You see, fruits and vegetables are the foods for C. In winter these foods cost more at the market so you are likely to eat less of them than in summer. Then along in February, March and April - or even as early as January - the result of running low in vitamin-C foods begins to show in family health. "That tired, run-down feeling" may set in. The youngsters may be tired and restless at school. Or they may complain of aching joints or sore gums. Maybe they have colds that drag along. Every mother would like to avoid these familiar winter ills.

Well, one way to do it is to understand a few important facts about vitamin C, and then plan meals, and buy and cook food with C in mind. One point is that everybody needs vitamin C every day because the body can't store it. The body can store vitamin A from yellow and green vegetables, cream, butter, egg yolk and so on, vitamin D from sunshine and fishliver oil. But it can't store vitamin C. You need a daily supply.

Another point to know about vitamin C is that you may need more of it at one time than another. Any extra strain seems to increase the body's demand for it. An illness, like a cold or an infection of some sort, with even a slight fever, makes an extra heavy drain on the body's vitamin C. Apparently the body uses this

vitamin in its fight against the disease. So under these circumstances you need to have more vitamin C in your meals. Extra work, heavy physical labor, or long hours under nervous strain, also calls for more vitamin C. An expectant or nursing mother needs one and a half times as much vitamin C as at other times. Old people don't need any more vitamin C than younger people, but they need to eat more vitamin C foods because they have more difficulty getting all the vitamin C out of food.

Now here are some tips to help you get your money's worth in vitamin C when you buy winter fruits and vegetables. These tips come from scientists at the Montana Experiment Station. They say fruits and vegetables differ a great deal in the amount of vitamin C they contain, and cost is no guide to vitamin C. Some of the most expensive fruits and vegetables have the least C; some of the very cheapest have the most. To illustrate, take a head of lettuce and a head of cabbage selling at the market in midwinter. The cabbage may cost as little as 2 or 3 cents; the lettuce as much as 15 cents. Yet Montana scientists report that the cabbage contains more than 20 times as much vitamin C as lettuce.

Among the fruits, oranges and grapefruit appear to be the best for vitamin C. But here's a point you may not have considered: a whole orange gives you more vitamin C for your money than the juice alone. The fibers and tissues around the sections of orange contain considerable vitamin C. When you use just the juice, a third of the vitamin may go in the garbage pail. And when you strain orange juice, you lose even more C. Fresh orange juice costs more per serving than orange in any other form.

If you prefer to drink juice instead of eating whole fruit, then the best value for C is the large can of citrus juice. These canned juices of orange or grapefruit are economical buys in large cans. Your family may not use a whole can at a meal, but you can keep the can in the refrigerator and use it next day. Little or no vitamin C gets lost in 48 hours if the juice stays cold. Tomato juice is

another economical source of C if you buy it in large cans. You need twice as much tomato juice as citrus juice to get the same amount of vitamin C.

Now about vegetables on the market in winter that are good buys for vitamin C. The cabbage and turnip families both rate high. Broccoli, brussels sprouts, and rutabagas top the list for C. But rutabagas offer C at less cost than the other two. Cauliflower, cabbage, and canned tomatoes rate a "very good" for vitamin C. And "good" for vitamin C are canned asparagus, cooked turnips, sweetpotatoes, sauerkraut, spinach, parsnips, potatoes, winter squash, and canned peas. The thrifty buys in th that list are potatoes, sweetpotatoes, parsnips, and winter squash. Other vegetables, like cooked carrots or canned green beans, are at the bottom of the list for C, though they are valuable in other ways.

Now our last tip - from the Maine Experiment Station - to help you get the most vitamin C from your winter salads. A fresh crisp salad of raw vegetables is one of the best dishes for vitamin C. But you will cheat yourself out of much of that C if you put the dressing on the salad well ahead of the meal. Vinegar hastens the destruction of C. So vinegar, allowed to stand long on cabbage, for example, may rob you of much of the value of the cabbage. And by the same rule, cole slaw isn't as valuable as a cabbage salad mixed just before serving.

That's all the tips on saving vitamin C for today. These have come from scientists at various State experiment stations.

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